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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0394
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

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STATE FOR WHA/BSC MDASCHBACH

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PARAGUAY OBJECTS TO MEDIA CLOSURES IN VENEZUELA

[¶1.](#) (SBU) Politicians across the spectrum rejected August 4 Venezuelan President Chavez's closure of media outlets August [¶3.](#) During his weekly press conference, President Fernando Lugo said his government "opposes all violence, and we consider silencing the voice of the media as violence, because we don't agree with it and we will not agree with closing community radios without reason here in our country and that nobody says anything." He added that "we don't agree that in Honduras, Micheletti also closes radios because they don't think like him." However, Lugo clarified that he still supports Venezuela's request to join MERCOSUR and seeks unity and consensus despite differences of opinion. Lugo said "we believe and are convinced that in the framework of international, commercial, diplomatic, and cultural relations, MERCOSUR must grow."

[¶2.](#) (SBU) The Paraguayan Congress came out strongly against the closures and permitting Venezuela to join MERCOSUR. Senate President Miguel Carrizosa was quoted in the press as describing Chavez's actions as "authoritarianism of the 21st Century instead of Socialism of the 21st century." Colorado Party President and Senator Lilian Samaniego demanded that Lugo officially reject Chavez's actions. Other deputies in the lower house of Congress also made clear their rejection of Chavez, his government, and the recent developments. Several senators and deputies asserted that Venezuela's request for admission to MERCOSUR is "in the freezer." In addition to Lugo, a minority of leftist members of Congress still support Venezuela's application to join MERCOSUR.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) COMMENT: Venezuela's request for MERCOSUR membership was controversial before Chavez' action on August 3. Key members of Congress will likely use the Venezuelan radio closures to garner additional opposition to Venezuela's candidacy. END COMMENT.
Holloway